

The Problem.

During bear season, Conservation Officers (COs) in British Columbia respond to thousands of calls and complaints about bears. Most of these problems begin when people allow bears to access non-natural food sources. Unfortunately, because there are few alternative control methods once bears have learned to access human food, Conservation Officers often have no choice but to kill "problem" bears.

Each year in British Columbia approximately 950 black bears and 50 grizzly bears are destroyed as a result of conflicts between people and bears.



Sources of Bear "Problems"

Access to Human Food

If bears are allowed to access human food and garbage, they quickly learn to associate it with people and become what is called food-conditioned. These bears lose their fear of humans and become habituated to people.

As people continue to encroach on bear habitat the potential for this conflict only increases.

Food-conditioned bears learn to expect human food and are more likely to approach people than wild bears. These bears can damage your property and they are a potential risk to you and the safety of your family. In most cases, however, when a bear comes into conflict with people, it's the bear that loses.

Human Development

Both bears and humans like to settle in valley bottoms and along streams. More development is occurring in these areas, meaning that bears will be living in closer proximity to people. Bears that live near human settlements can become "problem" bears if they are allowed to access non-natural foods.

"Problem" Bear Costs

Problem bears cost British Columbia taxpayers big money. The British Columbia Conservation Officer Service spends more than \$1 million every year responding to bear complaints and relocating or destroying bears. Property damage, which is not included in this figure, is estimated to be in the hundreds of thousands of dollars a year. Bears damage household items, fruit trees, apiaries, livestock and vehicles.

Once bears learn to access human food, management options, besides destruction of the bear, are limited.



Bears in dump at Whistler 1993.

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